

## ***FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** August 29, 2013

**Agenda Item:** Bighorn Sheep Research Capture/Removal

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Approval of Final Rule

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 10 minutes

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### **Background**

Bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) populations, once estimated at two million animals, have now been reduced to approximately 70,000 animals in the wild. Several factors have contributed to this decline including historical overharvest, habitat loss due to human settlement, and disease epizootics. The most important disease of bighorn sheep in the past couple of decades has been pneumonia. Multi-bacterial pneumonia has been responsible for 75-90 percent mortality in affected herds all over North America.

This project has Dr. Subramaniam Srikumaran of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Washington State University as the principal investigator. Investigators expect to develop a model for transmission of pneumonia in bighorn sheep, especially the transmission to lambs in a herd, and hope to demonstrate that recovered animals are the main sources of pneumonia infection for bighorn lambs. The study will use recovered animals from three different pneumonic herds held in captivity in separate groups and sampled to determine shedding of pneumonia pathogens. Each group will then be commingled with naïve (with respect to pneumonia pathogens) pregnant ewes. These ewes, and lambs born to them, will be sampled regularly to determine transmission of pneumonia pathogens from carriers to ewes and lambs, which will be confirmed through strain-typing. Lambs that have acquired the pathogens from carriers will be monitored for status of pneumonia and survival.

Findings will have long-term impact on disease management and conservation in all big game populations not only in North America, but all over the world. This study will provide new information to wildlife managers and veterinarians to design better strategies for prevention of lamb mortality.

The specific action proposed here is to allow the winter 2013-14 research capture and removal to out-of-state facilities of 4 – 6 adult animals from FWP Region 2 for this disease investigation.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

Public comment is limited to comments taken at the August Commission meeting.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

Alternatives include adoption as proposed or with adjustment, additions or deletions.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends endorsement of this action based on the limited number of sheep proposed for removal and the potential gain to management understanding of a significant population impact to many bighorn sheep populations.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission endorse the 2013-14 research capture and removal of 4 – 6 adult bighorn sheep from Region 2 as presented by FWP.